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DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
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MR. NITZE HAS SEEN

March 26, 1968

Dear Paul:

The increasing scientific endeavors in the various fields of oceanography sponsored by U. S. Governmental and non-Governmental agencies could, when conducted in sensitive ocean areas, give rise to international incidents and/or conflict with reconnaissance operations in the same areas which come under the cognizance of the 303 Committee.

As an example, the current oceanographic operations being carried out by the Research Vessel HUNT in the Sea of Japan, while being conducted at a reasonably safe distance from North Korea, conceivably could complicate the PUEBLO situation. The R/V HUNT does not come under the direct supervision of either the Joint Reconnaissance Center (JRC) or the Chief of Naval Operations.

Another example is the recently concluded Bering Strait oceanographic operation conducted by the U. S. Coast Guard's NORTHWIND. Although NORTHWIND's voyage similarly was conducted outside of Soviet territorial waters, an unfortunate intrusion at this time would have been most untimely.

In view of the potential risks of an incident, it would seem prudent to subject these operations to the same prior scrutiny as is now given to military reconnaissance operations in sensitive areas. It would also seem advisable to assess these operations in conjunction with planned military operations in the areas concerned, as the two may interact.

The Honorable  
Paul Nitze  
Deputy Secretary of Defense

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State, Dept. of Transportation, OSD reviews  
completed

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A convenient way of accomplishing such a review would be to include projected oceanographic and Coast Guard operations in the monthly schedule prepared by the Joint Reconnaissance Center. While some of the operations in question, including those of the Coast Guard, are not under the jurisdiction of DOD, we would hope that the authorities concerned would be willing to follow this procedure and would in fact see advantage in having an informed assessment of the risks involved in a particular operation. To preclude misunderstanding as to the purely scientific nature of these operations, the format for their inclusion in the JRC schedule could be carefully devised to maintain a clear distinction between scientific and reconnaissance activities.

If you see merit in this suggestion, I suggest that the appropriate officers in our two departments be instructed to develop a more precise proposal.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Bohlen

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